

# CONSUMER ALERT

datep.wisconsin.gov

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection



## Wisconsin Organizations Report Receiving Fake Invoices

**Release Date:** April 16, 2012

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*Editor's Note: A scan of a fake invoice received by a Wisconsin business is included on the second page of this .PDF file.*

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) is asking business owners and city governments to be on the lookout for solicitations masked as invoices for telecommunications services.

Businesses and city government offices around the state have recently received \$425 invoices for a "telecom maintenance agreement" from a company in California, despite having made no purchases from the business. DATCP's Consumer Protection Bureau has received written complaints from the cities of Eau Claire and Racine and businesses in Waupun, Green Bay and Elkhorn of invoices received on March 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. The Sheboygan Police Department also received this invoice, as did five additional businesses in that area.

The invoices are actually sales pitches for future services. Without questioning the validity of the document, businesses and agencies are at risk of paying for an expense that did not occur.

The Consumer Protection Bureau has sent the company an official warning concerning their violations of state and federal laws prohibiting solicitations disguised as bills. This deceptive practice is not exclusive to Wisconsin – the North Dakota Attorney General issued a cease and desist order against the same company in February, alleging that invoices for products that were never ordered or purchased are in violation of that state's consumer fraud laws.

If you have recently received an invoice for a "telecom maintenance agreement," be aware that it may be a solicitation. Make sure that your billing department knows if your organization has had any transactions with the sender before you consider making any payments.

If you received an invoice but did not make a purchase from the company, contact Consumer Protection to file a written complaint. Download a complaint form or file a complaint online at <http://datep.wi.gov>. You can also call the Consumer Protection Hotline at 1-800-422-7128.

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*Servicing your telecom needs.*

**La Verne, CA 91750-0970**

**Fax# 626-205-1133**

Date	Reference #
3/15/2012	[REDACTED]

\*\*\*\*\*3-DIGIT 531

Elkhorn WI 53121

Elkhorn, WI 53121

Web Site		Thank you for your business, this warranty covers preventative maintenance on all telecom system equipment, including, telephone instruments, switches, routers, & cabling	Terms	
www.us-telecom.com			NET 30 DAYS	
Quantity	Description	Rate	Amount	
01	TELECOM MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT	\$425.00	\$425.00	
Please remit to the above address		Total	\$425.00	

*Thank You For Your Business*